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Fort Kaskaskia

STATE PARK

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STATE OF ILLINOIS

Fort Kaskaskia



Fort Kaskaskia State Park, comprising 201 acres in Randolph County near Chester, was incorporated in the Illinois Park System in 1927 as a memorial to the early French and American pioneers who brought civilization to the Illinois wilderness.

Of the town of Kaskaskia, which was once "commercial queen of the west," the first capital city of Illinois, the seat of government during territorial days, and one of the principal settlements of the French, nothing remains today but the earthworks and foundations of the old fort, and the old Pierre Menard Home at the base of the hill on which the fort stood.

Kaskaskia was founded in 1703, and soon attracted a sizable number of settlers and traders. For a number of years it was protected by a wooden stockade but the structure was designed for Indian defense only. During the French and Indian War the inhabitants, fearing a British attack, petitioned for a fort and offered to furnish the materials. Their petition was granted, and Fort Kaskaskia, made of heavy palisades, was built on the bluff above and across from the town. There it stood until 1766, when the townspeople destroyed it rather than have it occupied by the British, to whom control had passed in 1765.

In 1778 George Rogers Clark took Kaskaskia from the British and garrisoned his men in Jesuit buildings which had been turned into barracks upon the suppression of that order. Thereupon the Illinois Country became a county of Virginia. But with the end of the Revolution local government broke down and Kaskaskia was plunged into anarchy. In 1784 John Dodge, a Connecticut adventurer, and a group of desperadoes, seized and fortified Fort Kaskaskia, and terrorized the villagers for several years.

In 1787 Illinois became a part of the Northwest Territory under the government of the United States. In 1809 Kaskaskia became the capital of the Illinois Territory, created in that year, and in 1818 reached the peak of its importance, becoming the capital of the new State of Illinois. Three rooms in the home of George Fisher were rented for use by the State, and there the first session of the General Assembly was held. In 1820, however, the capital was moved to Vandalia and Kaskaskia's decline began.

The course of settlement was northward, trade centers moved elsewhere, new roads diverted settlers, and the Mississippi relentlessly moved in on the town, eventually leaving only a few scattered remnants of what was once Illinois' most important settlement.

GARRISON HILL CEMETERY

Adjacent to the site of Fort Kaskaskia to the northwest is the Garrison Hill Cemetery. Originally the pioneers were buried in three cemeteries in lowlands at the junction of the Mississippi and Kaskaskia Rivers. In 1891, after the Mississippi had cut a new channel and the old cemeteries were in danger of being washed away, the State purchased the present tract on Garrison Hill and moved these early burials. In the center of the cemetery is a monument to these pioneers.

PIERRE MENARD'S HOME

At the foot of the hill on which the Fort was located is the home of Pierre Menard, presiding officer of the first Territorial Legislature and first Lieutenant Governor in 1818. Born in Canada, Menard



Engraved by J. B. H. & Co. Paris 1818

Paris 1818. Engraved by J. B. H. & Co. Paris 1818

moved to Kaskaskia in 1790. His home, preserved as a museum, was built in 1802. A fine example of French colonial architecture, it is constructed of oak with walnut interior, and with its wooden shutters cut all in one piece, presents a typical eighteenth century appearance. The kitchen, separated from the main building by an open porch, is floored with flagstones, and has an immense fireplace, a capacious Dutch oven and a water basin carved from solid stone. To the rear of the house is the original slave house, carefully preserved.

In the park where picnic and comfort facilities are available, a custodian is on duty at all times. Visitors are shown through the old home by a hostess thoroughly familiar with its interesting history.

● Old French Bible which may be seen at Pierre Menard Home.

SAINT E B I B L E

CONTENANT

L'ANCIEN ET LE NOUVEAU
TESTAMENT,

TRADUITE EN FRANÇOIS

SUR LA VULGATE,

Par Monsieur LE MAISTRE DE SACS,

NOUVELLE EDITION.

Avec de courtes Notes pour l'intelligence du Sens littéral & prophétique.



A PARIS,

Chez GUILLAUME DESPREZ, Imprimeur ordinaire du Roi & du
Clergé de France, rue S. Jacques, à S. Prosper & aux trois Vertus.

M. DCC. LIX.

AVEC APPROBATION, ET PRIVILEGE DU ROI.



● Fireplace in
Menard Home.



(2933)



● Overlook and
Shelter House.





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● The Menard Home,
with original slave
house to right
and rear.

Write to the Department of
Public Works and Buildings,
Division of Parks and Memo-
rials, State Capitol, Springfield,
for further information concern-
ing Illinois Parks and Memo-
rials.

Forty-two State parks, 25 of
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Lodges and cabins are an im-
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lodge managers.

Issued by

Department of Public Works and Buildings

Chas. P. Casey, Director

DIVISION OF PARKS

Ray Hubbs, Superintendent

● Garrison Hill
Cemetery.

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